

Case study — Lalit Kala Kendra

For the past sixty years, the Shivanand Pratishthan has been conducting a major musical event in Aundh, Satara district, Maharashtra, every year. The legendary Gajananbua Joshi had started this event as a 36-hour concert in memory of his teacher, Guru Shivanand Maharaj. Over the decades, musicians like Pandit Ravishankar, Kumar Gandharva and Kishori Amonkar have performed at this venue.



This year, when the **Lalit Kala Kendra (LKK), the Centre for Performing Arts at the University of Pune**, decided to expand their Faculty Enrichment and Hosting Conferences' initiative to include the Aundh concerts, the local Grampanchayat decided to construct a community hall in honour of this historic event.

"This was their contribution to the cause," says Satish Alekar, the well-known Marathi playwright and director of LKK, "and it was as much a recognition of the importance of such local traditions in Maharashtra, as it was a recognition of the Trust's involvement in Marathi theatre."

Marathi theatre thrives in Maharashtra's smaller towns, and the **LKK** has been actively engaged in collaborative work with historic traditions like the Shivanand Pratishthan. In the past year, LKK's outreach movement has conducted major events at other historic venues like the Kolhapur Gayan Samaj Dewal Club, which is now 113 years old, and the Vasantrao Achrekar Sanskritik Pratishthan in Kavkavali village, near Goa.

"Such a link, with an entire regional theatre practice, is unique to University theatre departments in India," says Alekar. It is as much a tribute to theatre-going habits in Maharashtra as it is a result of the **LKK's** work in the state.

The connection has a further consequence. It gives a new generation of trained theatre people coming out of the **LKK**, fresh opportunities to display their experimental work. Young theatre people such as Satish Manwar and Manaswini Lata-Ravindra, have displayed their work here, as well as at the LKK's *Natak Nama* at the Prithvi Theatre in January 2008, and the Samantar Natya Mahotsav held simultaneously in Ahmednagar, Nasik and Mumbai earlier this year.



Manaswini's plays, staged by Satish, such as *Alwida* and *Majhya Vatanicha Khara Khura*, are among the most discussed Marathi plays in recent years. Satish incidentally, comes from the rural district of Yeotmal in Maharashtra. He completed his Masters at the **LKK** in 1999.

The Trust had awarded the **Lalit Kala Kendra** a grant of Rs8.2 million in June 2005, as part of the Arts & Culture's 'Advance Learning in the Arts' sub-thematic. As a part of this project, the LKK supports six major theatre centres in Maharashtra, conducts a major outreach programme for its students, has a faculty enrichment programme, and develops new textbooks in Marathi on music and the performing arts.

"Majhya Vatanicha Khara Khura," written by Manaswini Lata-Ravindra and directed by Satish Manwar, alumni of **LKK**, is one of the better-acclaimed plays in Marathi in the past year.